



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

CHELSEA BUSINESSMAN SENTENCED FOR ARSON OF RIVAL BUSINESSES

Boston, MA... A Chelsea businessman was sentenced late Friday, January 19, 2007, in federal court in connection with his having arranged for arson fires to be set at three rival Chelsea businesses.

United States Attorney Michael J. Sullivan; Glenn N. Anderson, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in New England; Colonel Mark Delaney, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police; and Stephen Coan, Massachusetts Fire Marshal, announced that **TODD F. LECCESE**, age 33, of 7 Pine Tree Drive, Saugus, was sentenced by Chief U.S. District Judge Mark L. Wolf to 4 years and 6 months in prison, to be followed by 3 years of supervised release, and a \$25,000 fine. In addition, Chief Judge Wolf ordered **LECCESE** to pay restitution in the amount of \$591,000 to the three victims and ordered that the first \$50,000 be paid in the next 30 days. On January 6, 2005, **LECCESE** pleaded guilty to an Information charging him with three counts of arson.

According to evidence presented at prior hearings, the arsons took place as part of a concerted effort by **LECCESE** to eliminate his competition in the Broadway area of Chelsea. In March of 2001, **LECCESE** opened a furniture and bargain goods store called T&L's Discount at 320 Broadway. **LECCESE**'s store competed in part with a number of other stores within a two block radius, including among others Doug's Bargain Store at 472 Broadway, Doug's Jewelry Store at 411 Broadway, and Slaton's Furniture, Jewelry and Appliances at 286-294 Broadway. Between April of 2001 and July of 2003, these three businesses and one other which competed with **LECCESE**'s business suffered a total of 9 fires.

Specifically, **LECCESE** enlisted Chelsea resident Jose Muniz to set a fire on December 30, 2001, at Doug's Jewelry Store. Muniz forced entry into an unoccupied apartment that adjoined the jewelry store and poured gasoline through the bathroom window and ignited it.

On June 19, 2003, **LECCESE** again enlisted another Chelsea resident, Shawn Sandler, who went to Slaton's at approximately 1:00 a.m. and made his way to a part of the roof over the store. Sandler drilled five holes, two of which completely penetrated the rooftop, and then poured

a petroleum distillate down the holes before igniting it. The fire destroyed a portion of the roof and resulted in heavy smoke and water damage. Following the fire, the owner of Slaton's, which had operated at the site since 1941, decided to retire and sell the building. **LECCESE** subsequently purchased the building in October of 2003, relocating his store there.

Finally, on July 23, 2003, **LECCESE** had Sandler go to Doug's Bargain Store at approximately 4:30 a.m. After gaining access to a light well that sits over the ceiling of the store, Sandler cut into the roof around the PVC piping and then poured a gasoline based liquid into the hole and ignited it. The resulting fire caused damage to the bargain store and an adjoining McDonald's restaurant.

Shawn Sandler was sentenced in June 2006, to 12 years and 7 months in prison for his role in the arsons. Jose Muniz pled guilty to setting two fires on behalf of **LECCESE** and was sentenced in February of 2006, to 6 years and 5 months in prison.

The case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Chelsea Fire and Police Departments, and Massachusetts State Police Troopers assigned to the Massachusetts Fire Marshal's Office. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Donald L. Cabell in Sullivan's Criminal Division.

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